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TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ

SUBJECT: COR SPEAKER MASHADANI DISCUSSES HURDLES WITH SOFA
AND ELECTIONS LAW

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani told PolCouns on May 30 that opposition amongst Iraq's political leaders to provisions of the SOFA is growing and that most controversial are issues touching on the status of bases, air space, immunity and visa issues, and free movement of U.S. troops. These issues were discussed in a May 26 Political Council for National Security (PCNS) meeting, but the Iraqi negotiating team was not present to brief on the talks. Mashadani supports the Turkmen's proposal for Kirkuk in the elections law, which calls for equal representation (32 percent) among the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, with the remaining seats (4 percent) for Christians and minorities. PolCouns stressed the elections law would likely be delayed due to Kurdish opposition to this proposal, and urged Mashadani instead to work for alternative means of addressing Kirkuk within the elections law. End summary.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT (SFA)

¶12. (C) Even though Mashadani did not attend the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) meeting on May 26 he shared with PolCouns the conflicts raised regarding the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) issues. He said he met with Prime Minister Maliki to discuss the SOFA prior to his Arab trip the week of May 25 and was dismayed to hear the PM's summation of U.S. positions. The Iraqi negotiations on economic and political issues are going well, he stressed, but security issues are the sticking point. He highlighted objections to USG security objectives, which as he described them include 400 U.S. military bases, control of air space, full immunity for military and civilian personnel, waiver of visa/entry requirements, and free movement of troops without coordination with the GOI. PolCouns responded that the U.S. and Iraq are not that far apart on the basic framework of the SOFA and that negotiations are ongoing. He noted the Iraqi SOFA negotiating team was not present for the May 26 meeting to explain the context of some of the USG objectives. Mashadani agreed that more detailed briefings of the PCNS members was needed.

¶13. (C) PolCouns noted Iran's interest in derailing the negotiations, referencing current media coverage on this issue. Mashadani acknowledged the U.S. is the only country that can bring Iraq out of United Nations Chapter 7 status. He stressed the importance of the U.S. military presence to protect Iraq from some of its neighbors (i.e. Iran), but also noted Iraq's status as a sovereign nation. He added there is currently opposition to the SOFA from UIA (ISCI, Dawa, Sadrist, Badr, Fadila) as well as Hewar, noting some of the Kurds and Tawafiq also have concerns. Iraqiyya's position is unclear, Mashadani said.

PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS LAW

¶14. (C) Mashadani said there is no problem with the

provincial elections law -- except with the issue of Kirkuk. The conflict stems from a proposal from the Turkmen to add language to the law for an equal 32 percent representation among the Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen, with the remaining seats (4 percent) for Christians and minorities. Mashadani noted he personally agrees with the Turkmen solution, and called the Kurds and Foaud Massum (PUK CoR bloc leader) "extremists" in the same breath. In response, PolCouns stressed that Iraqi leaders should allow UNAMI to continue its role of providing technical assistance on the difficult Article 140 issues and keep such controversies out of the sphere of the elections law. Otherwise, he warned, the elections law will likely be delayed indefinitely and UNAMI work on disputed internal boundaries will be undermined. PolCouns encouraged Mashadani to meet with UN Representative Stefan DiMistura to discuss options for addressing electoral modalities in Kirkuk. Mashadani noted he would also be meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to discuss the issue.

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